

Message Text

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FM AMEMBASSY LONDON

TO SECSTATE WASHDC 4280

INFO AMEMBASSY DUBLIN

AMCONSUL BELFAST

C O N F I D E N T I A L LONDON 13456

E.O. 11652: GDS

TAGS: PINT, PGOV, UK(NI)

SUBJECT: NEAVE STATEMENT ON BIPARTISAN POLICY ON NORTH-
ERN IRELAND

REF: LONDON 13045

1. FOLLOWING 75-MINUTE TALK HELD AUGUST 28 WITH NORTHERN IRELAND SECRETARY REES, OPPOSITION SPOKESMAN ON NORTHERN IRELAND, AIREY NEAVE, TALKED TO THE PRESS.

2. NEAVE TOLD REPORTERS HE HAD INFORMED REES REPORT OF A BREAKDOWN IN BIPARTISAN POLICY ON NORTHERN IRELAND WAS "OVER PLAYED." CONSERVATIVES RESERVED THE RIGHT TO CRITICIZE GOVERNMENT POLICY AND NEAVE DENIED PARTY WAS DIVIDED ON NORTHERN IRELAND. NEAVE SAID HE HAD FULL APPROVAL OF SHADOW CABINET FOR HIS COMMENT TO REES, AS WELL AS A SPEECH ON IRISH PROBLEMS HE GAVE AUGUST 9 (SPEECH HAD INITIATED EXTENDED PRESS SPECULATION THAT CONSERVATIVES WERE CONSIDERING WITHDRAWING SUPPORT OF GOVERNMENT IN NORTHERN IRELAND).

3. NEAVE SAID CONSERVATIVES WERE ACUTELY ANXIOUS ABOUT THE SECURITY POSITION IN VIEW OF RELEASE OF DETAINEES.

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NEAVE ALSO SAID HE HAD ASKED REES FOR ASSURANCE THAT NO

IMMUNITY FROM ARREST WAS GIVEN TO ANY KNOWN TERRORIST. WHEN NEAVE TOLD REES THAT RELEASES FROM DETENTION WERE CAUSING BACKLASH IN PROTESTANT CIRCLES, REES REPORTEDLY REPEATED HIS INTENTION TO CONTINUE RELEASES, BUT SAID IF FULL-SCALE BOMBING RESUMES, HE WOULD HAVE TO "REDETAIN" MANY PEOPLE.

4. ACCORDING TO GUARDIAN NEAVE HAD ARRANGED MEETING WITH REES BEFORE MOST RECENT PUB BLASTS. GUARDIAN FURTHER REPORTED THAT MEETING WAS CORDIAL, THOUGH NOT WARM AND INTIMATE. GUARDIAN ALSO POINTED TO CRITICISMS WITHIN CONSERVATIVE PARTY OF NEAVE'S PERFORMANCE, WHILE SAYING THAT THERE HAS BEEN NO OPEN SPLIT IN THE PARTY.

5. COMMENT: NEAVE HAS A UNIQUE ROLE IN CONSERVATIVE PARTY AFFAIRS, BOTH BECAUSE OF HIS HANDLING OF NORTHERN IRELAND (THE PERENNIAL HOT POTATO ISSUE), AS WELL AS ACTING AS MRS. THATCHER'S CHIEF AIDE AND EXECUTIVE HEAD OF HER OFFICE. SOME CONSERVATIVES HAVE TOLD EMBASSY OFFICER THAT HOLDING THE TWO JOBS LIMITS NEAVE'S EFFECTIVENESS IN EITHER.

6. EMBASSY HOPES TO OBTAIN FULL TEXT OF NEAVE'S SPEECH OF AUGUST 9 WITHIN NEXT FEW DAYS. DURING SUMMER LULL OF POLITICAL ACTIVITY, IT IS POSSIBLE SOME REPORTERS HAVE GROSSLY EXAGGERATED WHAT HE SAID IN AN EFFORT TO STIMULATE NEWSPAPER STORY. ON THE OTHER HAND THERE IS NO DOUBT THAT MANY CONSERVATIVE MP'S ARE RESTIVE ABOUT NEAVE'S PERFORMANCE IN BOTH OF HIS POSITIONS. END COMMENT.

RICHARDSON

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